LINGUISTIC AND FUNCTIONAL PECULIARITIES
OF AN ENGLISH GASTRONOMIC DISCOURSE IN A FICTION TEXT

The paper examines linguistic and functional peculiarities of an English gastronomic (food, culinary, gluttonic) discourse within a literary text. The observations are based on the novel “Tuscany for Beginners” by Imogen Edwards-Jones.

An English gastronomic discourse has recently become a focus of many philological studies. The particular scope of research is made up of compositional features of a gastronomic discourse as a personality oriented kind of interaction connected with the concepts of “food” and “eating”. Scholars examine its ethnic and cultural manifestations, verbal realizations, speech and written genres that represent food discourse. In addition, there are theoretical provisions for classifications of gluttonic vocabulary and terminology as well as analysis of their semantic features. Also a gastronomic discourse is viewed as a particular linguosemiotic space with the reference to its lingual presentational features. A specific investigative perspective is outlined in cognitive linguistics that discusses gastronomic discourse as a means of cognition and categorizing the reality.

The research undertaken enables the author of the given paper to highlight the peculiarities of a food discourse on various compositional layers of I. Edwards-Jones’ novel, to single out lexico-semantic groups of the vocabulary items that verbalize the culinary discourse in the book, to determine the means that fictionalize the type of discourse under consideration. The recipe texts included in the novel’s texture also acquire features of a literary work. They become attributed with subjective presentation, additional pragmatic, linguocultural and stylistic connotations. Due to the gastronomic discourse the writer ridicules ethnic stereotypes concerning eating habits and preferences. Cross-cultural markers of the text are present in the authentic food names (mostly Italian) that promote the overall bilingual narration, recipes’ presentation as well the diary’s entries of the book. On conducting the research the author arrives at the conclusion that the food discourse in the novel can be viewed a poly-functional phenomenon.

Key words: gastronomic discourse, a piece of fiction (literature), fictionalization, lexico-semantic group, culinary recipe, ethnic stereotype, cross-cultural interaction.

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Research territory. A contemporary paradigm of humanistic scholarship welcomes a wide range of cross disciplinary studies. Literary and linguistic researches are naturally interconnected and independent, as both deals with a word in its wide meaning. Thus words construct textures of a various length enabling them to become units for study in a number of philological research areas. There also observed a penetration and blending of genres in literary and linguistic spheres that makes a particular perspective for philological and socio-cultural studies.

Food and eating as one of the basic physiological needs for a human being have always been a focus of various researches, philological ones including. In fiction gastronomic topics have become a special attraction.

Literature review. Contemporary linguistic studies have evidenced a number of approaches aimed at specifying particular aspects of food discourse. Scholars operate the synonymic terms of a gastronomic or gluttonic discourse to denote a type of written and speech genres dealing with food, cooking and food consuming spheres.

An English gluttonic discourse has become an object of linguistic consideration undertaken by O. Orlova (Orlova, 2017), O. Olianich (Olianich, 2015), I. Derzhavetska (Derzhavetska, 2014), J. Fuller at al. (Fuller at al., 2013), A. Fellner (Fellner, 2013). The scholars discuss the following research vectors:

- functional, structural, lexical and grammatical peculiarities of recipes;
- ethno-cultural and linguo-cultural manifestations as well as linguistic means of the gastronomic discourse’s verbalization;
- functional and structural features of a gastronomic discourse as a personality oriented kind of interaction connected with the particular concepts of “food” and “eating”;
- definition and classification of gluttonic lexis and terminology;
- lexicographic presentation of food discourse;
- cross-cultural and gender manifestations, etc.

In cognitive linguistics the notions of a gastronomic world mapping and food metaphor outline the specific investigative perspective that reflects the way ethnic communities cognize and categorize reality (V. Katermina (Katermina, 2016), M. Undritsova (Undritsova, 2015), T. Maksimova (Maksimova, 2013), Ye. Yurina and A. Baldova (Yurina, Baldova, 2017)). Lexical corpora of a language embrace a number of gustative entries the functions of which are described both in fiction and non-fiction texts (M. Mokhosoeiva (Mokhosoeiva, 2013), S. Kovpik (Kovpik, 2013)). In addition, phraseological and idiomatic expressions with a gastronomic component became an object of a linguistic investigation (O. Bielykh (Bielykh, 2016), O. Lapynina (Lapynina, 2016)).

Finally, the didactic potential of culinary texts is widely considered nowadays. The particular emphasis is made on teaching a genre-based writing. A gastronomic text can also expose language learners to new words that come into usage denoting things and phenomena that emerge on a constant basis. In such a way it promotes the formation of students’ lexical competence. Food metaphors help EFL learners become aware of the a language’s aesthetic potential as well as its linguistic and cultural-cultural background that may serve as a means of enhancing linguistic and cross-cultural awareness of EFL learners (C. Bubel & A. Spitz (Bubel, Spitz 2013), O. Dolgusheva (Dolgusheva, 2019)).

However, little research has been undertaken to study the food discourse in a fictional piece. In a literary text it acquires a number of forms and can be interpreted as a poly-functional phenomenon which outlines the acuteness of this paper.

The objective of the paper is to single out linguistic and functional peculiarities of a gastronomic discourse in a literary text and to follow the means that make the gastronomic discourse becomes fictionalized. The subject matter of the paper is linguistic, functional and cross-cultural features of the gastronomic discourse within a fiction text. The object of the research is made up of a corpus of textual fragments containing gastronomic elements selected by means of an overall examination of the novel “Tuscany for Beginners” by Imogen Edwards-Jones.

Findings, discussion and results. The gastronomic discourse when it comes within a literary text acquires a few peculiar features that fictionalize the discourse to a certain degree. In such context a food discourse becomes partially or completely different in comparison with the ones in other functional styles. The novel
“Tuscany for Beginners” by Imogen Edwards-Jones (Edwards-Jones, 2005) is a good example to follow the ways due to which fictionalization occurs.

The novel’s structure presupposes the coexistence of several narrative and compositional layers. The first one is the story itself that is made up of the narrated events or plot lines. The second one is presented in the form of the protagonist’s diary in which Belinda shares her personal feelings, experiences, likes and dislikes, impressions and expectations. Finally, there are texts of culinary recipes that are dispersed throughout the whole text of the book. They, on the one hand, provide readers with the instructions and procedures of cooking dishes and, on the other hand, function as a means of characterization.

It is important to notice that not only the recipes constitute the gastronomic discourse in the book. Despite the fact that readers are exposed mostly to interpersonal relationships of the characters, food and cooking are organically interwoven in the novel’s texture.

A particular interest in food and eating is determined by the leading activity of Belinda Smith. Having divorced in England she moved to Italy – a country well known for its cuisine and diet. Belinda becomes a hostess of a B&B hotel in a small tourist-friendly settlement. Thus cooking food and serving guests appears to be her job that with time turned into her life style and life philosophy. No wonder then that the gastronomic theme is omnipresent in all of the novel’s layers and gastronomic vocabulary is frequently resorted to in creating images and characterizations, interpreting personal and ethnic stereotypes, etc.

The linguistic texture of “Tuscany for Beginners” demonstrates various manifestations of the culinary topic. For instance, it is possible to identify lexico-semantic fields related to food, cooking and consuming dishes as well as gastronomic tastes and preferences. Having examined the lexical corpus of the book we have singled out the vocabulary units that can be attributed to the following lexico-semantic groups:

1) names of meals (lunch, soirée, presupper cocktail, breakfast);
2) names of herbs, plants, and spices (figs, fennel, aubergine, oil producing olives, young vines, lavender (bush), rosemary, herbal teas);
3) names of dishes (home-cured hams, stuffed zucchini, tiramisu, pâté, grilled veggies, the slab of foie gras, paprika-covered crisps);
4) names of food processing and cooking procedures (pour, cut, cover with, fill with);
5) names of furniture items used for cooking and serving food (cupboards, home-produced stalls, table);
6) names of kitchen utensils and tableware (water glass, jar, carafe, coffee machine, mixing bowl, chopping bar);
7) names of places where food is cooked, consumed and sold (ristorante, kitchen, local supermarket, the bakers, trattoria);
8) names of serving amounts (family-size packet of crisps, a hunk of cheese, chunks of bread, mansized bite, piles of fruit, a sip of wine, mouthful, forkful);
9) names of gastronomic entertainments (party, picnic, Big Cheese, cheese-festiva, Festa di Formaggio, roll down the hill, Medieval fair, cheese-rolling competition);
10) menu items (menu, ‘dolce’ section);
11) names of food trade marks (Battenberg cake, Branston Pickle, Australian Riesling, Cheddar, Marmite, Cadbury Dairy Milk);
12) names of people with special nutrition needs (festa goers, vegetarians, vegans);
13) gastronomic imagery (epithets, phraseology) (a foaming dish, of cream-colored something, candy-pink pair of rubber gloves, in vino veritas, candy-coated musings, honey-colored buildings);
14) names of human organs and digestion processes (stomach, to chomp, to pop into the mouth, grind, a rash of saliva, jaws);
15) names of gustatory tastes (hot peppers rocket, all-encompassing deliciousness of Donna Hay cuisine, savor delicious mouthful, sweet tomato, stale bread roll, sniff, smells of ripe fruit, bloodrich salami, mild Cheddar);
16) words that are used in a catering and food logistic sphere (catering college, gingham organize the food, arrange the table, canapé circuit, tablecloth table decorations).

Such a variety of gastronomic vocabulary still does not prove grounds to define the book as a culinary novel. The above enlisted lexical units create the cultural background for I. Edwards-Jones to realize her authorial intention by portraying particular character types, commenting on ethnic and gender stereotypes, expressing her personal view points concerning a number of social issues, creating a humorous text stylistics, etc.

Besides, the given examples point to a cross-cultural nature of the culinary sphere. The book by an English-speaking writer is crammed with Italian and sometimes French names of products, of spices and dishes (provided in their authentic languages) that nowadays do not require any translation or explanation for foreign readers as they are recognized by their authentic format throughout the world. Contemporary globalization processes enable a wide spread of the Italian cuisine so that such words as mozzarella,
prosciutto, parmesan spaghetti, salami and others are associated with a particular national food culture and diet having no analogies in other countries.

Cross-cultural interaction can be followed throughout the whole novel due to its bilingual textual presentation. From the very beginning of the book readers are exposed to English-Italian narrations and meditations. Inserting Italian words into an overall English language texture is not limited by its formal presence. It is aimed at establishing Belinda’s personal, ethnic and cultural identity that empirically can be attributed to I. Edwards-Jones herself.

Language alterations are also observed in the recipes’ texts. In style they are similar to the major narrative part. In such a way the author fictionalizes the recipe genre assigning it additional connotations in comparison with a conventional genre patterns.

The analysis of the recipes included in the novel “Tuscany for Beginners” provides the ground to single out the following aspects of their fictionalization. First, the category of the author undergoes the most noticeable modification. It becomes personalized as the commentaries supplementing the recipe texts are marked by extreme subjectivity. So the author postures herself as an experienced and competent cook who is empowered not only to instruct readers, but evoke emotions, valorized judgments and aesthetic pleasure.

Second, the structure of the recipes appears non-conventional. The introductory part with a list of ingredients gives way to extended preliminary reflections on the author’s personal successful or unsuccessful experiences as far as cooking or consuming food are concerned. Here there are exclamatory sentences, witty observations and imagery that sometimes do not have any gastronomic associations at all. The example below suggests an illustration of the writer’s contemplations of Bruschetta di casa mia da festa di formaggio the charm and authenticity of which are determined by the entertaining atmosphere and eye-catching colors rather than by its ingredients.

A trick with festa food is that it should be eye-catching. When it has to compete with the noise, the flags, and the fun of the party, your food should be nice and loud. I, therefore, tend to favor bright, jolly, luscious peppers and buxom tomatoes to make my table look enticing and vibrant (Edwards-Jones, 2005: 256).

The dish is presented as a part of the author’s personal experience and as a product of a particular culture and interpersonal and cross-cultural connections.

Next, the provided list of ingredients lacks precise culinary measuring norms. I. Edwards-Jones’s strategy is to appeal to readers’ own cooking talent and intuition. The writer invites readers to select products themselves and balance their amount in accordance with personal preferences: “plenty of hunks of rustic bread, toasted and dipped in olive oil”; “olives, pineapple, ham, and anything else that tickles your fancy!”; “your most expensive balsamic vinegar take it from me, as a woman who has only made this mistake once, if you scrimp you will notice the difference”. In addition, the author’s commentaries concerning food selection may become a marker of her world outlook. For example, favoring the local food becomes an intrinsic part the author’s culinary philosophy: “Take a free-range happy chicken that once roamed a farmyard with friends”; “I also like to keep the theme of the festa going, so I serve cheese at the cheese festa, mushrooms at the mushroom festa, and so on. It is, after all, a celebration of the local produce, so one should be as celebratory as local as possible”.

Besides, the procedure of cooking a dish differs from the one found in a conventional recipe format. The writer discards a step-by-step algorithm and favors the mixture of simple sequence of moves with extended descriptive and meditative deviations addressed to readers. The latter ones are encouraged to demonstrate their culinary competence and cooking skills such as determining the time span required for preparing a dish, a degree of its readiness, or the way the dish would look like: “Roll out your base, cover it with tomato paste and mozzarella, then lay each topping ingredient on the dough in an attractive pattern... So release your inner artist, and make patterns or pictures with your anchovies – flowers, starbursts, little sunsets, pastoral scenes” (Edwards-Jones, 2005: 164).

Another way of fictionalizing the category of the author is assigning non-gastronomic characteristics to food items. I. Edwards-Jones often resorts to epithets and similes to produce associative images: ‘pizze are as thin as paper, twice as crunchy, and four times more devilish and delicious’; ’a sociable dish’; ‘immense, round, lustrous, and rudely tasty tomatoes’; sophisticated plates’; ‘a salad with a spontaneous look’; ‘when the rice is firm and fat, like a baby’s arm; ’pizze are... four times more devilish and delicious!’ etc. These examples certify the writer’s mastery of language and style as well as her philosophic attitude towards cuisine as a sociocultural phenomenon.

A special attention is drawn to the narrator’s instructions as for serving the cooked dishes and evaluating food preferences. The reader can come across metaphors (‘Spaghetti Bolognese is the mother of all comfort food’; ‘I find it works best with trestle tables, packed with long-lost friends, on one of those hot
summer days that just go on and on forever’; ‘when the wine and conversation are still flowing’) zeugmas (‘serve on a jolly tablecloth with jaunty festa folk’, ‘serve with some warming mashed potato and plenty of friends’; ‘serve at dusk with a warm laborer and plenty of wine’) and epithets (‘a salad with a spontaneous look’; ‘baking hot Italian summer’, ‘serve with an elegant smile and relaxed hair’, ‘jolly, luscious peppers’; serve on a sun-blushed terrace in a simpatico atmosphere’) that enhance the fictional nature of the recipes.

The peculiar diction of I. Edwards-Jones is also marked by the authorial occasional words. Often they are bilingual blending lexemes. English and Italian words are combined in such a way that newly created words naturally fit the context: rustica-meets-a-little-bit-of-England, beef-and-suet woman, postmercato etc.

Another fictionalized aspect of a gastronomic discourse in «Tuscany for Beginners» is an overall ironic style of the novel. The writer’s irony touches upon ethnic stereotypes (dealing with both auto- and hetero-images) as far as food preferences are concerned. I. Edwards-Jones admits the fact that she purposefully resorts to a grotesque portrayal of the Japanese, Britons, Americans, Italians, or Belgians. In her opinion it is the realm of a fiction text that allows her to create comic portraying, for the eccentricity of characters’ presentation is very appealing to readers and makes them not be prejudiced favorably or unfavorably about ethnic groups. An interesting word play “americana – americano” associatively attributed to an American woman antagonist may serve an example.

In the novel stereotypical features, apart from personal and national ones, are connected with food and eating habits. Readers are frequently invited to compare gastronomic traditions and preferences of various ethnic communities. The most familiar stereotype concerning the love of Italians for pasta turns out to be a butt of the ironic valorization in the example that follows:

Oddly, the Italians are not quite fond of pasta salad as we Brits, but I’m sure if we ask for it constantly in their restaurants, it is only a matter of time until they get to grips with this truly interesting delicacy – after all, a hundred or so airlines and Bella Pasta chains can’t be wrong! (Edwards-Jones, 2005: 191).

Moreover, stereotypical idea of food culture in Great Britain can be observed in the recipe of Pizza di Casa Mia. Discussing the differences in cooking and eating the dish, the author resorts to neutral vocabulary, though in the context the lexemes ‘prebought,’ ‘reheat’, ‘prefabricated’ acquire connotative meanings that imply monotonous sameness of the English diet and inability to cook anything delicious.

The example of creating auto- and hetero-image images adds an ironic flavor to the novel’s gastronomic discourse. I. Edwards-Jones expresses her adoration of the Italians’ culinary talents so much that she is eager to turn into an Italian woman both emotionally and physically.

The recipe is so delicious it makes me want to chuck away my UK citizenship and pretend that full-bodied red Italian blood courses through my passionate veins! (Edwards-Jones, 2005: 109).

Conclusions. The gastronomic discourse within a literary text tends to get fictionalized. In the novel “Tuscany for Beginners” by I. Edwards-Jones it can be observed on the linguistic and functional levels.

The major language peculiarities include a wide range of culinary vocabulary units that constitute several lexico-semantic groups embracing a various gastronomic spheres. The lexical variety is enriched by occasional neologisms that, on the one hand, certifies to the author’s mastery of language, and, on the other, supports the overall comic (ironic) stylistics of the book. Besides, food and gluttonic imagery is marked by unexpected associative implications.

The recipe texts that are dispersed through the novel also acquire features of fiction. Retaining their main instructive function, they, being extremely subjectivized by the author (narrator), demonstrate ethical, emotional and anecdotal appeal to the readers.

The gastronomic discourse penetrates the novel on all its narrative layers. So it functions as a means of characterization, of revealing the author’s world outlook, ironizing ethnic stereotypes as well as promoting cross-cultural interactions.

Further research is suggested to determine the ways other kinds of discourse become fictionalized within a literary context.

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